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QUESTION OF EAST TIMOR

Progress report of the Secretary-General

1. The purpose of the present report is to inform the General Assembly, as I have done in past years, of the continuing exercise of my good offices aimed at finding a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution to the question of East Timor. The dialogue between Indonesia and Portugal has been under way since 1983. After an interruption in 1991, it was reactivated towards the end of 1992. Since then, I have held four rounds of discussions with the Foreign Ministers of Indonesia and Portugal. Through my aides, I have also kept in touch with East Timorese groups and personalities representing various shades of political opinion.

2. As indicated in my report last year (A/48/418), the positions of the two Governments on the issue of the Territory's status remain far apart. Nevertheless, an improved atmosphere has recently been achieved in the dialogue. The two sides have shown a manifest interest in avoiding a confrontational approach and have carried out a number of mutually agreed confidence-building measures, primarily of a humanitarian nature. I have urged both parties to build on these steps and to consider a number of concrete ideas that could further advance the talks while improving conditions and fostering confidence inside East Timor. At the last round of talks, held at Geneva on 6 May 1994, agreement was reached on a number of steps to be undertaken by both sides (see press release SG/SM/5283). These points of agreement were arrived at following a series of thorough consultations before the Geneva meeting. The consultations included discussions with the Permanent Representatives of the two sides in New York, and exploratory discussions on a wide range of ideas, in January 1994, in Portugal, Indonesia, East Timor and Australia with senior government officials, East Timorese political and religious leaders and others representing differing trends of Timorese opinion.

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* A/49/150.

3. I will highlight three of the points that were agreed upon at the last round of talks. Firstly, the two Ministers agreed that access to East Timor for the United Nations and human rights and humanitarian organizations, as well as visits to East Timor by East Timorese living abroad and visits of East Timorese to Portugal, should be continued and expanded. Secondly, I underlined to the two Ministers that a dialogue among East Timorese representatives of all shades of opinion could make important contributions to the ongoing bilateral dialogue under my auspices. The two Ministers have agreed that I should explore ways of convening such an all-inclusive intra-Timorese dialogue. Thirdly, the two Ministers expressed their willingness to meet separately with East Timorese representatives holding opposing views on the political status of East Timor, i.e., the Foreign Minister of Portugal would meet with those who support integration with Indonesia, and the Foreign Minister of Indonesia with those opposed to integration. I intend to facilitate these meetings in the near future.

4. Human rights issues have figured prominently in the dialogue between Indonesia and Portugal under my auspices, among them the full accounting for those who died or are still missing as a result of the violent and tragic incident which took place at Dili on 12 November 1991. I have continued to discuss with the Indonesian Government the situation of East Timorese in custody, including the leader of the armed independence movement, Jose "Xanana" Gusmao, who is serving a 20-year prison term after his capture in November 1992, and the need for taking measures aimed at their early release. In addition, the appropriate human rights organs of the United Nations have continued to deal with the situation in East Timor. In March 1994, the Commission on Human Rights adopted a consensus statement on the subject (see E/1994/24-E/CN.4/1994/132, para. 482). The Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities also discussed the issue at its forty-sixth session in August 1994. In July 1994, the Commission's Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions visited East Timor at the invitation of the Indonesian Government.

5. In the coming months, I intend to assist the two Governments in identifying a series of issues for consideration by them in advance of the next round of talks, including possible avenues towards achieving a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution. I will shortly undertake a series of consultations with various East Timorese groups and personalities with a view to convening an all-inclusive intra-Timorese dialogue.

6. The next round of talks between the two Foreign Ministers will be held at Geneva in the first half of January 1995.